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Life may be a journey, but there are different ways of getting to where you're going. Specially if money is no object. **Lavina Melwani** in New York polls elite, upmarket travel companies to

find out how the super-rich travel and where they like to go.

ARE YOU TRAVELLED-OUT? BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, A MILLION TIMES? Are you fed up of waiting in line at airports with herds of travellers waiting to board? Are the commercial flights with wailing babies and wall-to-wall passengers getting you down? Have the destinations themselves lost their excitement as you trudge to places where countless tourists have gone before?

Then it's time to move on to the caviar and champagne of tours, the Tiffany of Travel, as it were. For the jaded traveller who's been around so much that the world itself seems small, there are a handful of elite travel agencies that put the technicolour back into the travel scene and really

make you see the world anew. These include TCS Expeditions, Abercrombie & Kent (A&R), Intrav, and **Our Personal Guest**. They offer the ultimate adventure to exotic destinations, journeying in luxury, cocooned in private jets and unwinding in private villas and haciendas, far from commercial tourist traps.

Travel is fine-tuned on a private jet journey, custom-designed and arranged for you on a Gulfstream, Citation, and Challenger executive aircraft, flying you on a private wine-tasting jaunt through Southern France or an art-collecting expedition in West Africa. Private jets include Boeing 737, which takes just 44 pas-

sengers in a space designed for 120, and the L1011, wide body that is reconfigured for just 88 passengers in a space that normally seats 362.

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Then there are travel operators who customise trips to the whims of a couple or even a single client. Long before she started her own travel company, **Our Personal Guest**, New York-based Pallavi Shah helped organise the India trips for Jackie Kennedy, John Kennedy Jr, Goldie Hawn and other celebrities. She has masterminded the trips to India for Asia Society, Whitney Museum and magazines like *Vogue* and *Town and Country*. In fact, her success with these highly individualised trips led to her starting her own travel company, creating her own niche in the luxury market. “We create individual experiences for you which aren’t duplicated, pre-planned or prepackaged,” she says. “It’s literally a tour programme that you can’t buy—it’s highly customised.”

Her trips are the ultimate in inside details. She organises trips from Argentina to Italy, orchestrating every day so that it is intimate and off-the-beaten-track. Shah chartered the entire Maharaja Saloon buggy for just one couple celebrating a special day. For another client who was celebrating her 50th birthday with 10 friends, she etched out a 30-day trip in Italy, meandering from Rome to Lake Coma in the north of Italy with wonderful little villas and al fresco dining rooms thrown in. Shah organised an entire 18th-century evening for her and her friends on a private villa on the lake. Each day a special menu was printed and each of the guests received a keepsake gift every day throughout the 30-day trip. These highly personalised trips can cost from \$ 1,000-3,000 per day per person and include top hotels and transport, including private jets. Shah says she offers her clients the intangibles which make the trip memorable, and the series of experiences and events that help capture the raison d’etre of a place.